

maximum damage on each other? That is not how adults in the communities across our country solve their problems, and that is not how they would like us to be solving our problems, but that is actually what is happening right now in this body.

The legislation before the Senate is supposed to be about national security, which is the first and most important duty of the Federal Government. Republicans and Democrats, all 100 Members of this body, tell ourselves and tell our constituents that we love and want to support and provide for the troops.

I want that to be true. Thus, I think we should be able to agree that national security is far more important than trying to run up partisan scores in another culture war battle. By the way, culture war battles are almost never settled well by compulsion, by government, and by force.

But here we are, getting ready to have divide again, this time over the issue of women in the draft, and I want to ask why.

Let me ask a question that should be obvious. Why are we now fighting about drafting our sisters, our mothers, and our daughters into a draft that no one anywhere is telling us they need?

Seriously, where is there any general who has appeared before us and said that the most pressing issue or even a pressing issue about our national security challenges and efforts at the present time is that we don't have enough people to draft? Where has that happened? Who has said it? Because I have been listening, and I haven't heard a single person from the national security community come before us and say: Do you know what we need? We need more people in the draft.

I haven't heard that conversation anywhere.

This fight about women in the draft is entirely unnecessary, and wisdom should be nudging us to try to avoid unnecessary fighting. We have enough big, real, and important fighting we should be doing around here. Why would we take on unnecessary fighting?

So before we send out our press releases and before we decide to condemn people that are on the other side of a culture war battle, why don't we just pause and together agree on this one indisputable fact: We have the best fighting force that the world has ever known. In fact, it is an all-volunteer force right now. We are not drafting anybody, and no one is recommending that we draft anybody. So why are we having this fight?

Rather than needlessly dividing the American people over a 20th century registration process, why wouldn't we do this: Why wouldn't we pause, stop the expansion of the draft, stop to study the purposes of the draft, and actually evaluate whether we need a draft? Maybe we do, but let's actually evaluate it before we start fighting over the most controversial pieces of it.

Let's not start by fighting about who to add to the draft. Let's not start by trying to import culture warring into a national security bill. Let's start by asking if we are really certain we need the draft.

I am introducing a simple amendment, and I hope that this body could agree that its aim is common sense and its aim is to deescalate our bitter conflicts. My simple amendment would replace the NDAA's controversial draft provisions with three relatively non-controversial—and I think much more important—steps.

No. 1, my amendment would ask the Senate to admit that the draft, which last had a call, by the way—the last call of the draft was in December of 1972. I was 10 months old, and I think I am 5 years older than the youngest Member of this body. The last time there was a call in the draft was December of 1972. We should probably admit that it is time for a reevaluation instead of just continuing on autopilot.

No. 2, it would sunset the draft 3 years from now unless this body decides that we have consulted the generals and we can tell the American people that we need the draft to continue. So the second thing it does is sunset the draft 3 years in the future unless we would act to restore the draft.

No. 3, it requires the Secretary of Defense to report back to this body—to report back to the Congress—in 6 months on the merits of the Selective Service System rather than simply continuing it on status quo autopilot, unscrutinized.

Again, this isn't asking the Secretary of Defense to wade into the culture wars or to take a lead in any social engineering. By the way, I am the father of two girls so there is nobody who is going to outbid me on the limitless potential of young women in American life, but that is not what this is all about. This is about the Secretary of Defense reporting back to us after consulting with the generals and telling us one of three things.

I think it was a pretty simple question. We should have the Secretary of Defense come back before Congress in 6 months and say to us one of three things. Either, A, the all-volunteer forces we are actually using right now are sufficient and they think the draft is obsolete, in which case the sunset would just go into effect; or, B, they would tell us that after consideration they believe the draft is still necessary and some version of the present draft should be continued; or, C, they actually think we have a deficit of human capital to potentially draft, and they think we need an expansion of the draft. Then this body could debate who do we expand it to.

But let's first have the Secretary of Defense consult the generals, come back to us in 6 months, and say: A, an all-volunteer force works; B, we have about the right amount of human capital registered for the draft; or C, we think we need to expand the draft.

Maybe we will say we should have men who are older than 26 years added to the draft. Maybe we should add women. Maybe there will be some other configuration of people we would add to the draft. But until we know we need more people in the draft or that we need a draft at all, why would we dive headlong into what would be the most controversial version of this debate.

Again, the generals are probably going to tell us they are fine with an all-volunteer force, but we don't know that. So why don't we have them report back before we start bickering.

One of the fundamental purposes of this body is to debate the biggest issues facing the Nation and to do so in an honorable way. That is what the Senate is for. The reason we have a Senate is to debate—not abstractions—but to address and ultimately solve the meatiest challenges that the Constitution in present circumstances demands we tackle. Right now women in the draft isn't really one of those issues, so I don't know why we would start fighting about it and dividing so many of the American people about it.

If there is any Senator who believes that the purpose of the NDAA should be to have a culture war fight, humbly I would invite him or her to come to the floor and please make that case. If there is a reason we should have a culture war fight in the context of the NDAA, tell us why we should do it. But, if not, let's avoid unnecessary cultural division and stick with the actual national security tasks that are before us today.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING DR. JAMES CRASE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a distinguished Kentuckian and talented physician who has sadly passed away. Dr. James Crase, a good friend of mine who was a veteran and a former State senator, departed this life on May 28. He was 78 years old.

Dr. Crase, born in Letcher County, KY, practiced medicine for over 53 years, 40 of those years in his beloved hometown of Somerset, KY. He served